

PERCOLATION TEST APPLICATION PROCEDURE HARFORD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

In the absence of public sewer service, the Harford County Code (Chapter 216) and the Code of Maryland Regulations (26.04.02) require soil percolation testing as part of the site review process for an on-site disposal system (septic system). Any property owner who desires to install a new on-site disposal system (OSDS), or repair or replace an existing OSDS, must first obtain a sanitary construction permit from the Health Department.

The following steps must be taken to initiate the percolation test process:

1. Complete an application for a soil percolation test.
2. Submit a site plan.*
3. Submit the required fee (cash or check made payable to Harford County, Maryland).
4. Provide copies of any previous soil testing results obtained by a consultant, and any environmental assessments that reference environmental or public health concerns.

*Site Plan:

1. The basic site plan must be drawn to scale (1"=30', 1"=50', or 1"=100') and contain the following information:
 - a. Location of existing and proposed property lines or easements.
 - b. The footprint of any existing or proposed house or structure (shed, pool, etc.).
 - c. Location of existing or proposed driveway or parking area.
 - d. Location of existing or proposed OSDS or Septic Reserve Area (SRA).
 - e. Location of all wells, OSDS or SRAs located within 200 feet of the property.
 - f. Siting other potential sources of contamination (underground storage tanks, sludge holding facilities, pipelines, etc.) within 200 feet of the property.
2. Additional information required on a site plan for the subdivision of land includes:
 - a. Soil types.
 - b. Percolation test pits locations.
 - c. Natural resource districts (NRD).
 - d. Contours in minimum 5 foot intervals.
 - e. Streams, swales, storm water management facilities, etc.

Upon receipt of a percolation test application:

1. The application will be evaluated for completeness of the required data.
2. The application will be reviewed to determine if a percolation test is permissible at this time. Certain soil classifications may only be tested during the wet season (typically February 1st - April 30th depending on soil moisture conditions). If the tests cannot be performed at this time, the application and fee will be returned to the applicant.

(OVER)

3. If there is no scheduling restriction, the staff will contact the designated person by phone to arrange the percolation test and, if necessary, acquire additional information.
4. The owner/applicant is solely responsible for contacting **Ms. Utility** prior to digging.
5. Staff will remind the applicant/property owner that he is responsible for providing the following items at the time of the percolation test:
 - A backhoe and qualified operator to excavate the required percolation test holes. The backhoe must have the capability of excavating to a depth of 14 feet with a 2-foot bucket.
 - A shovel.
 - Sufficient water for the test(s) (typically 15-20 gallons/lot).

Please have the backhoe available at the scheduled time. Holes may be excavated prior to Health Department arrival; however, please verify this with Health Department staff. Experienced consultants and equipment operators generally have good insight as to where to dig. This office does not recommend that holes be left unattended.

6. Staff will notify applicant/property owner of test results via mail upon completion of the percolation test and review of the data. No decision is final until it is received in writing. Please be advised that a satisfactory time test should not be construed as an approval to install an on-site disposal system. In evaluating the application, the Approving Authority shall consider the following: topography, geology, soil classification, hydrology, surface and subsurface drainage conditions, soil descriptions, the need for seasonal testing, the history of septic systems in the area, and the establishment of the required on-site disposal area.

In the event of inclement weather (rain or snow), please contact the Health Department to verify or reschedule appointments.

For additional information on the soil testing process, please visit our web site at www.harfordcountyhealth.com.

Questions concerning percolation test applications, scheduling, or test results should be directed to any of the following individuals:

Leonard Walinski - 443-643-0317
Connie Alexander - 443-643-0319

Tom Gieseler - 443-643-0320
Josh Rupert - 443-643-0318